• 697

The ecclesiastic courts applied church law. An ecclesiastic court was attached to each diocese (there are ten of these in Bulgaria), nominally presided over by the bishop who was usually represented by his assistant, the vicar. These ecclesiastical courts were of two kinds:

1. Disciplinary courts whose function it was to try delinquent priests. They consisted of bishop and two priests from the diocese. At present they continue to function, though improperly.

2. Courts whose function it was to settle legal questions, arising from marital relations, and to grant devorces. They consisted of the vicar and two diocesm councilmen who were secular members of the Diocesan Council functioning at the see of the bishop; this Council annually elected two of its members to serve as Diocesan judges.

The decisions of these courts could be appealed to the Holy Synod, which had a special section for divorce cases, and which, sitting in full session, acted as a court of the last resort. The Holy Synod, also had the sole right to try delinquent bishops whenever called upon to do so. In such cases the trial was conducted before a court composed of the president and two members of the Holy Synod, especially designated for that purpose.

Before giving consideration to a request for divorce, the diocesan court always attempted to reconcile the parties. Even after the cases had been taken up by the court, if the

evidence was not sufficient, the court could order a temporary separation of the parties with the recommendation that they themselves explore all possibilities of reconciliation. Only after all such possibilities had been exhausted did the court grant the divorce. 698

C. Religious Instruction and Training of Priests

Religious instruction in public schools and theological training of priests were conducted in a manner different from that used in many other countries. The Bulgarian Church did not operate any denominational schools open to all. For a period of time it had no special schools for training of the priests, and, finally, religion was not always taught at public schools by clerics. Special schools for the training of future priests became definitely established only after the Exarchate came into being and in some respect were under the supervision of the State. 793 874

After the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate and especially after the Bulgarian State was restored, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church took measures to raise the cultural standard of its hierarchy. Until then its higher dignitaries had been instructed first at the Greek Theological Academy on the island of Halki (one of the Princely Isles off Constantinople in the Marmara Sea) and later (after 1878), in Moscow, the corresponding centers in Switzerland, Germany, and Austria-Hungary (mainly at Czernowitz in Bukovina). To carry out its